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NEWSLETTER: DECEMBER 1994

NEXT FILM NIGHT - MONDAY, DECEMBER 5

An early Christmas gift for you - two top movie features - and CHRISTMAS CAKE FOR SUPPER!

MOVIE 1: "RHYTHM ON THE RANGE" - Paramount 1936. Directed by Norman Taurog.

One of the only two Westerns Bing made..(the other - the "Stagecoach" remake in the twilight of his career).
In the starring role as cowboy Jeff Larrabee, he teams with Frances Farmer, Bob Burns, Martha Raye (in her film debut, and one of her best-ever performances) and Lucille Webster Gleeson, in a winning Ethel Barrymore-type role. Also seen in minor roles were Louis Prima, and Bessie Paterson, who had won a contest sponsored by the movie's publicity people, to find "The Most Beautiful Cowgirl in the West." (She later married Johnny Burke, who wrote so many Crosby hits).
The movie opens with Bing, mounted on a white horse in the centre of Madison Square Garden, New York, singing "Empty Saddles," as part of his efforts during the Annual Rodeo there. The action then moves "West," with Frances Farmer as an heiress on the run from an arranged marriage, who stows away in the freight-train carriage taking Crosby and company, and a prize Hereford bull, back to the "range." Naturally a romance develops - and also naturally, its path is not a smooth one.
A lot of wide-open spaces fun, and top songs including the already-mentioned "EMPTY SADDLES," plus "I'M AN OLD COWHAND," "I CAN'T ESCAPE FROM YOU," "MEMORIES," "THE ROUND-UP LULLABY," "HANG UP MY SADDLE," and the title tune.

MOVIE 2: "DOWN ARGENTINE WAY" - 20th.Century Fox 1940 - Produced by Darryl F.Zanuck

ALICE FAYE was originally listed to star, but when she was rushed to hospital with appendicitis, BETTY GRABLE was summoned from Broadway to take the lead. (Probably only fair, as Grable had lost the starring role in the previous year's "Man About Town" because of her appendectomy).
The movie made Grable a star - and also brought to prominence CARMEN MIRANDA, who stole many scenes in an explosive debut which instantly earned her the sobriquet, "The Brazilian Bombshell."
In a bright technicolour confection, Grable played an American heiress (they seemed to be plentiful, according to Hollywood) who falls in love with an Argentinian horse-breeder in the person of DON AMECHE. CHARLOTTE GREENWOOD co-starred, and in addition to Carmen Miranda, the supporting cast featured J.CARROLL NAISH, HENRY STEVENSON, and CATHERINE ALDRIDGE, with the NICHOLAS BROTHERS among the specialty acts.
The title song was a huge hit, and among others were "TWO DREAMS MET," "MAMA YO QUIERO," "SING TO YOU SENORITA," and "DOIN' THE CONGA."

START TIME - 7.15 p.m.

VENUE: As usual, the GRIERSON THEATRE - approached from the back entrance off Treasury Place, City (with its own private free car park)

PLEA ...from the "doorkeepers" .. it would be appreciated if the correct, or near-correct, money could be proffered at the door. A plethora of notes of $20 and higher value, causes great problems with change.

FILM NIGHT DATES FOR 1995 - FOR YOUR DIARY (ALL MONDAY NIGHTS)

FEBRUARY 13	AUGUST 14
MAY 8	OCTOBER 9
JUNE 19	DECEMBER 4

Among "possible" features (not confirmed) are "BELLS OF ST.MARY'S," "LITTLE BOY LOST," and "HOLIDAY INN."

The November Dinner Dance, as anyone who attended will know, was a huge success. Our thanks in particular to DANNY KEATING, for his tremendous input and generosity, and also to RON WERE, who worked tirelessly in organising the function. (Ron apologises that he didn't have all the personal "chats" he'd promised, but time, or lack of time, precluded).
Everyone of the approximately 130 people at the Musician's Club on November 12, thoroughly enjoyed the meal, the dancing, and the fine entertainment provided by Danny Keating, Lesley Hetherington and Bill Willmore - and also "cameos" from Wilma Ryan and Norm Murdoch. If you think a repeat function would be a good idea, please let the Committee know.

NEW MEMBERS. A warm welcome to JUDY ROBINSON, JOAN and BOB McKENZIE, JIM and MRS.LEWIS,(our intrepid travellers from Kangaroo Flat) LUCY MARCHANT, NANCY ROBBIE, MRS.DUNDON, and MISS DOHERTY.

No changes in office-bearers resulted from the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING in October. The Committee remains as BOB NEATE (Sec.), KEITH DORMAN (Treas.) RON WERE, ADA and TED PARADISSIS, BILL BENNETT, and JOSIE CONWAY.

Anyone in Melbourne (or close-by) interested in the "POPULAR SINGERS" commemorative Stamps recently issued by the U.S.Postal authorities (20 on a sheet - four each of Bing, Al Jolson, Ethel Merman, Nat "King" Cole, and Ethel Waters) - can obtain them from the CITY STAMP MARKET, (Susan and John Richardson) 28 Degraves St., Melbourne (or G.P.O.Box 2351V, Melb.3001) Phone 654-3549.

A new book release is BING CROSBY - A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY, by J.Roger Osterholm, a Professor in the Humanities Dept. at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, where he teaches courses including cultural history, and writing. As the publicity says - "Bing Crosby recorded nearly 2,000 songs, appeared in more than 100 films, starred in radio shows for nearly 30 years, and remained a hit on television for 25 years. He

produced the best-selling record of all time, was the nation's leading film star for a record five years, and was voted one of the most influential Americans of the century by LIFE magazine." And this book is a detailed guide to Crosby's fascinating life and career.
The biography overviews and discusses the more important events, influences and achievements of that life. The chapters that follow present a full record of his work in film,radio and the recording industry.
The extensive bibliography lists books and articles about Crosby, and assesses the value of these. In U.S.dollars, the normal price is $65.00 - but a discount price of $52.00 (U.S.) is available to members of the BingThings Society. As the VBCS is a member, Bob Neate has Order Forms for anyone wanting the book.

(On the subject of discographies, BingThings' BOB LUNDBERG advises, in a letter to the VBCS, that he has completed his own listing of Bing's songs from LP's, CD's and audios, with a total of about 4,400 from some 2,400 different titles. Once revision is finished, he will send us a copy. Could be a much cheaper alternative to the above).

The Committee has available, POSTERS with a Crosby photograph and details of the VBCS activities and facilities, together with relevant contact addresses etc. If you'd like one to display on any available noticeboard, with an eye to gaining new members, just ask!

CROSBY COLLECTORS' CLUB (U.K.) Derek Parkes has sent a wad of information on ordering procedures, paying procedures, and progress (or lack of progress) in despatching discs etc.already ordered from England. If you have ordered, or are about to order, his detailed letter is available from Bob Neate.

The Bing Crosby COMMEMORATIVE STAMP (mentioned earlier) was launched in a ceremony at Gonzaga University on September 1st. - and those present had the opportunity of having the first-day issue autographed by Bing Crosby himself. No - not the late Harry Lillis, but his grandson, who was actually christened "Bing," but is better-known as "Flip." He had a busy day signing souvenir cancellations under the Gonzaga campus statue of his grandfather.

The BINGTHINGS magazine, "BINGTALKS," tells of a members' "Rhythm on the River" weekend, cruising from New York to West Point and back - with much enjoyable viewing of collections of sheet music, posters, clippings etc - and general Crosby camaraderie. Sounded great!

Other snippets tell of:- the first organised get-together of Dutch Crosby enthusiasts, in Breda, Holland....

upcoming books on Bing by members Gary Giddins and Norman Wolfe ....

a stack of new releases (in the U.S.) - in particular 13 new CD'S including Armed Forces Radio Broadcasts 1943-45 - and reports of many more on the way. (In Australia, just keep asking record outlets. Several members report that Batman, and J.B.Hi-Fi Nunawading are excellent sources)...

Paramount Home Video's release of Frank Capra's original "Broadway Bill" (1934) - coupled with the 1950 remake, "Riding High," starring Bing ....

the first Annual Spokane Dixieland Jazz Festival, organised by Jan Scobey, widow of Bob, to be held June 2-4, 1995. She is hopeful of getting clearance to dedicate the event to Bing. ....

Mel Torme's new CD - "MEL TORME PRESENTS A TRIBUTE TO BING CROSBY - PARAMOUNT'S GREATEST SINGER." On the sleeve, Mel writes ... "In the world of music, in 1994, Bing Crosby is the Forgotten Man. And that is unfair, unconscionable and utterly ridiculous. Prior to Crosby's emergence, singers were staid, stiff and rigid in their approach to the popular song. Bing changed all that, with his easy off-the-elbow style of 'crooning.' His relaxed renderings became blueprints by which a whole generation of singers worked - following, copying and in some instances, imitating. The Sinatra furore changed all of that, and Crosby found himself relatively ignored in favour of bleating bobbysoxers and mass hysteria. But one has only to look at his body of work as an actor and singer to realize that he was the true original - a handsome, articulate star with a voluminous vocabulary and a voice filled with timbre and feeling. The title of this album should have been 'The Paramount Singer.' That title has a two-fold meaning - the singer under contract to Paramount Pictures, who espoused a light airy totally-believable acting style and a comfortable, easy manner with songs written for him by Ralph Rainger, Leo Robin, Johnny Burke and Jimmy van Heusen. Also, 'The Paramount Singer' means just that - the topmost, number one, paramount singer of them all. That was what Bing was - the singer of the century. Without Bing, there would have been no Sinatra or Haymes or Como or any of the rest of us. Bing Crosby was THE role model and without him as the pathfinder, we would have all lost our way. Bravo Bing!"
(So saith Mel Torme, who's certainly doing his best for Bing at the moment. His new book "My Singing Teachers" has a chapter on Bing - and he has just finished a month-long "Tribute to Bing Crosby at Michael's Pub in New York City.) ....

the real Bing (as distinct from the character painted by Gary Crosby, and the author of "The Hollow Man." In the magazine "Reminisce," former Spokane resident Shirley Stickney tells of growing up with the Crosbys as neighbours. Bing often sat at their piano, with her on his lap - picking out tunes with one finger, and singing the hits of the early 20's. Years later, Shirley's daughter contracted polio and needed extensive and expensive treatment. Her grandmother plucked up the courage to ask Bing, who was in Spokane at the time, for a loan. His reply - "No, I won't lend it to you - but I'll give it to you." The happy ending was that the little girl recovered. ....

and last, but far from least ..the 50th.Wedding Anniversary of Bob and Joyce Lundberg, founders of the BingThings Society - celebrated on 1/9/94. Warmest congratulations from all members of the VBCS to them both.

FINALLY - the subject we all try to avoid - FINANCE! There are still some subscriptions outstanding. PLEASE ..if you intend renewing, do it soon, so membership lists etc. can be finalised. $6.00 Single .. $8.00 for couples.

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